



Idaho Naturalist news

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 4

OCTOBER, 2014

Milkweed and Monarch Workshop

Beth Waterbury, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, IDFG

The Intermountain West (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming) represents a huge data gap in the knowledge base of the western monarch butterfly and its host plant, milkweed. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game will host a monarch monitoring workshop focusing on western monarch populations and citizen science monitoring June 19 and 20, 2015. The workshop is offered by the Monarch Joint Venture Project, a partnership of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic programs working together to support and coordinate efforts to protect the monarch migration across the lower 48 states. The 2015 workshop will be field-oriented, and free of charge. Curriculum would include basic monarch biology, the monarch life cycle, and monitoring protocols of monarch life stages in association with milkweed. Save the date and stay tuned for workshop registration information to come.

INSIDE

THIS ISSUE:

Henry's Fork Work	2
Salmon Spawning	3
Butterfly Count	4
Three Apps For You	5
Nature Photos	6
Naturalist Adventures	8
Insect Frass	9



The Idaho Naturalist News is a quarterly newsletter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program.

Edited by Linda Kahn and Sara Focht

For questions and comments contact Sara Focht at Sara.Focht@idfg.idaho.gov.

Send newsletter contributions to Linda Kahn at hmc214@yahoo.com.



Left: Monarch butterfly at Hagerman WMA. Photo by Robert W. Ellis, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter.



Right: Monarch butterfly on milkweed at MK Nature Center in Boise, Idaho. Photo by Susan Ziebarth (IDFG).

Henry's Fork Chapter Recent Work

Penny Ann Freppon, Idaho Master Naturalist, Henry's Fork Chapter

The summer of 2104 has been quite active. In brief, the following new and continuing IMN volunteer activities have been under way and will continue until the close of our season and likely continue in 2015.

The Harriman State Park Jack Fence project, headed by and sustained by James F. Kemp, M.D., IMN and Harriman State Park Board Member, has its destination on Hwy. 20 within reach. With approximately 30 Jacks to go and one more volunteer day that includes a number of IMNs, Friends of Harriman, good neighbors, and friends, the fence will conclude as planned! This project has been years in the making; next year we will report with more details on this labor-intensive and greatly needed project.

Several IMNs have conducted wild swan nesting observations on Harriman State Park lakes and reported essential data to Ruth Shea with the support of IMNs Cathy and Jeff Dufault. Ruth Shea, swan wildlife expert, lectured in one of our IMN classes and gave another talk for the benefit of the public at the Nature Conservancy/Flat Ranch Preserve office.

We have begun hosting the historic buildings at the Harriman State Park on weekends in order to better serve the public as an educational and enrichment program. In addition, a Junior Ranger program and interpretative walks activity have been supported by IMNs at Harriman State Park.

“Bear Education” continues in our area. This project has involved several agencies, including IDFG, United States Forest Service, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. Multiple



events throughout our region have occurred that help educate young and old on how to be safe in bear country and to help deepen an appreciation for this endangered wildlife species. Pictured above are Jeff Dufault, Gretchen Vanek, and Cathy Dufault. Photo permission Gretchen Vanek.

IMNs have served as host to keep the historic Johnny Sack cabin open on weekends at Big Springs in Island Park. This cabin is admired and appreciated by many local, out of town, out of state, and sometimes, international visitors. This service could not have been sustained without several dedicated volunteers working in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and directed by our new president, Karen Davidson, who provides leadership in many critical ways.

IMN Mary Van Fleet, the founder of our chapter, continues as she has for six years to manage our communication to and from the multiple agencies our chapter serves. Val Zupan supports all IMNs in record keeping. Kathleen Steven is completing her second year as secretary, and we have six new IMNs in training.



As the Flat Ranch Preserve/Nature Conservancy celebrates its 20th year under the leadership of Matthew Ward and summer intern Leiding Taylor, their

work load continues in providing many public services regarding visitor education, ranch management, and habitat restoration. IMNs are involved in attending lectures and responding to requests for volunteers. For example, we arrived at the FR/NC to assist in set-up and clean-up activities for the 20th year celebration as well as supporting this event through our attendance.

We continue to volunteer at the Henry's Fork Foundation office in Last Chance/Island Park. Our duties there involve front desk activities and providing visitors information on the Snake River fishing and the health and monitoring of the river itself. Our presence at the office is managed by IMNs Cathy and Jeff Dufault.

Our volunteers are now assisting Anne Marie of the Henry's Fork Foundation in conducting Snake River fishermen interviews on the status of their fishing as they depart from their day on these world-class waters. We continue to monitor and collect for our monofilament recycling program at high use fishing locations. The IMNs have worked to clean up Hwy 20 as we do each season. And the native plant garden, initiated by Bren Dismuke, IMN and Master Gardener at Harriman, continues to be maintained and expanded by Bren and other IMN volunteers.

Henry's Fork MN Nominated for Award

Forest Service employee and Idaho Master Naturalist Sue McKenna has been nominated for the prestigious "**Gifford Pinchot Excellence in Interpretation and Conservation Education Award.**" She was nominated for her work creating new interpretive signs at Mesa Falls, near Island Park. Sue is passionate about interpretation, sharing the information she gathers with everyone, and continuing to learn more about the history and natural resources of our area. Sue shares her knowledge with all of our visitors, especially the young minds of our local school children. Sue is always looking for new ways to present information to all of our visitors. We are very proud of Sue and her efforts to spruce up Mesa Falls.



Information and photo for this article came from Liz Davy (USFS) and was previously published in the Island Park News on July 3, 2014.

Salmon Spawning at Rapid River

Steven K. Berg, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter

Notice of salmon spawning came from the Rapid River Hatchery in early August, offering opportunities for volunteers from the IMN program. I took the bait and drove to Riggins for the first day of crowding and sorting. Employees from two other hatcheries – Oxbow and Magic Valley – also lent a hand to hatchery assistant manager Chad Henson and local staff in the operation.

Chinook salmon make their way 600 miles from the Pacific Ocean up the Columbia, Snake and Salmon Rivers passing fish ladders, unfriendly dams and other hazards – even being trucked a few miles – to the Rapid River ponds. The goal is to collect between 2,400 and 3,000 adults for the spawning process. The normal ratio is 55% females and they can be depended upon for 3,500-5,000 eggs each. This year, our sorting day count was about 1,650 females and 1150 males, roughly a 60/40 ratio.

In a nutshell, the crowding process contemplates using seine nets (bottom edge held down by weights and top edge buoyed by floats) which are dragged through the holding ponds. Once in place, the trailing basket volume is gradually diminished, allowing workers gathered around the perimeter to grasp salmon by the tail, hold them up to determine gender and check female maturity, (sort) and distribute them to male/female holding ponds. Sounds pretty easy and straight-forward . . . but in practice, it's reminiscent of a Keystone Kops episode. The very strong salmon don't care to be picked up by the tail, and the power of their escape-attempt thrusts splashes water all over the humans surrounding the net. To a person, we were totally soaked – into the rain gear and down the waders – all while laughing like kids. Despite the frivolity, every participant treated the fish with great respect, understanding their valiant efforts enduring a perilous journey to get back to home waters and preserve the species, and realizing the worth of each healthy salmon.

Because it is so early in the season, only two females were “ripe,” or ready for harvest; numbers will steadily increase to peak egg taking in late August and early September. I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by the very orderly processes observed by the hatchery staff, and the strict adherence to medical/health practices, sterilization, tagging, expeditious handling and statistical recording. As it turned out, I was assigned the position of assistant colander washer (sterilization with iodine) after egg collection.

The evaluation process takes place each Monday and Thursday throughout August and September until the required number of eggs has been reached. In 19 months, this hatchery will release 3,000,000 smolts from this year's spawn into the Little Salmon (200,000), the Snake (400,000) and Rapid River (the remainder).



Steven Berg holds a Chinook salmon headed for the “boy” enclosure as part of the sorting process. The fish is identifiable by the relatively slender body and hooked jaw. Notice that Steve was totally soaked during the 4-hour duration, which was pleasant at the mid-August commencement of spawning season. In late September with frost on the ground and ice on the water, being soaked is not as comfortable.

Butterfly Count Thank You

Paul Castrovillo, Boise Front Butterfly Count Organizer

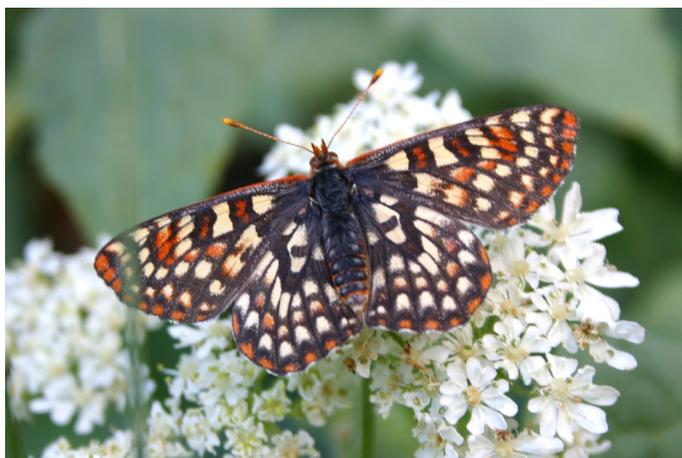
I want to thank everyone who came out to help us with the Boise Front 4J Butterfly Count this past July one more time. We had a great survey with superb weather and collected some valuable data which has been passed on to the North American Butterfly Association for inclusion in their butterfly database.

We began the count with 36 counters – I’m pretty sure that is a new record for us. By the end of the day we had observed 57 different species of butterflies and recorded a total of 1,328 individual butterflies. I believe we undercounted just because we were so overwhelmed with some of the common species, like Variable Checkerspots. I bet we actually saw more than 1,000 of them alone. Next year I’m going to bring one of those little hand-clicker counters to try to get a more accurate total for that species.



Fifty-seven species is not shabby. (There are only approximately 150 species of butterflies to be found over the whole of the state spread out over spring, summer and fall.) It is the record high so far for the 24 counts that have taken place – and it is the number of species that we have seen for the past 3 years in a row! We saw several species that are fairly rare – and often not observed – on the Boise Front Count: species such as the Monarch Butterfly, Edith’s Copper, Sooty Hairstreak, Callippe and Mormon Fritillary, Northern Crescent and Common Roadside Skipper. We also got skunked on several that we almost always encounter: Anise Swallowtail, Sheridan’s Hairstreak, Large Marble, West Coast Lady and Two-Banded Checkered Skipper. That’s the kind of stuff that keeps these counts interesting.

Thank you to Master Naturalists Barbara Balance, Patricia Berens, Ann Brueck, Corrine Christ, David Hopkins, Judy Wojcicki, and Allen Wylie. Hope you had a good experience if you attended this year and hope to see you next July on the 25th Boise Front 4J Butterfly Count.



The Variable Checkerspot on yarrow. Photo by Paul Castrovillo.

Three Apps for the Naturalist

Nicole LeFavour, IDFG volunteer

Being connected to technology is generally something we seek to avoid when experiencing the wild. However, more and more tools are created each year which help those who want to increase their knowledge of the natural world do just that.

Three particular smart phone apps are worth trying as they are great companions for those delving into the wild.

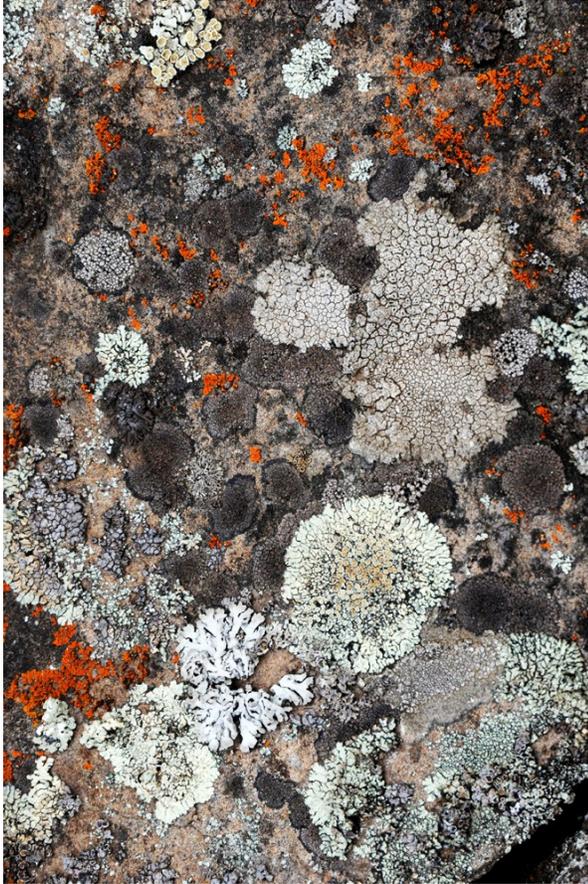
RogersMushrooms and Rogers field guides to plants and shrubs load data and photos onto your phone so that they can be used just like actual paper field guides without the weight of carrying multiple books and keys. These guides include excellent photos and advanced search functions for those who want to identify, for example, mushroom specimens by edibility, cap color, spore color and other characteristics.

iChirp USA is a bird identification app which includes recordings of the sounds of about 200 North American birds. The sounds come with photos and basic descriptions. Some include information on range and all have links for further information on line.

SkyView is an astronomy app which works only when connected to the internet. It allows viewers to point their cell phones at the sky, day or night, and see on screen which stars, satellites, planets and moons are orbiting in the sky above as well as below the horizon. This app also allows users to track the movement of the sun, moon or planets and even allows one to choose the season or date to track an orbit through the sky. Tapping on objects on screen allows one to pull up more detailed information on the US Space station, a planet, star or constellation.



Fungus on a tree trunk. Rock Wren below Swan Falls Dam. Photos by Bob Ellis, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush -tseppe Chapter.



Lichen along the Weiser River Trail near Midvale, Idaho. Photo by Bob Ellis, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter.



Black Cottonwood leaves turning near the Boise River. Photo by Sara Focht.



Photo collage by Bob Ellis, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter.

Master Naturalist Adventures

Paula Horning, Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter

My husband and I were workcampers in Missoula, Montana for the summer. We had some wonderful times up there this summer, including close moose, bison, and elk encounters and explored the Lolo and Gallatin NF's and Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks.

Now we are on our way to New Mexico, where I have accepted a winter job at Bosque Del Apache Wildlife Refuge for the US Fish & Wildlife Service in Sorroco. I will be working at the visitor's center and also doing some field work in the refuge with spotting scopes. The Bosque is well known for its migratory birds location and they conduct an Annual Festival of the Cranes there (in which we will be able to sit in on lectures and learn from experts all over the country). We are super excited for this opportunity and to travel there. If you find yourself in the southwest this winter, stop in!



Above: Paula Horning is an Idaho Master Naturalist (Sagebrush-steppe Chapter) from 2013.

Left: An American Bison wallowing in a dusty patch. Photo by Paula Horning.

A Note to a Master Naturalist Instructor



Katydid eating on a leaf. Photo by Bob Fairey Idaho Master Naturalist, Sagebrush-steppe Chapter.

Elizabeth Dickey, from the Idaho Botanical Garden, is an instructor for the Idaho Master Naturalist program (Sagebrush-steppe Chapter). She teaches a variety of topics, but one of her favorites is teaching about insects. Elizabeth recently received an email from a Master Naturalist from 2009.

As an instructor, it is nice to get notes like these from Master Naturalists. I've been meaning to tell you a little story about a discovery and attach a photo. Here is the note from Leanne to Elizabeth.

“Elizabeth, since you taught us about frass [insect scat] in Master Naturalists, I've seen things I might have missed because I "tracked the frass." Recently, the edge of our patio was covered with some black poop. At first I thought it was mouse poop and I was concerned because I don't

want mice to get in the house. After I studied the poop a bit, I decided that it was too small and there was too much of it concentrated in a specific area for it to be from a mouse. I looked up at the Virginia Creeper vine that is growing around the edge of the patio cover. Low and behold, I found the perpetrator of the frass... it was a katydid. I've attached a photo that my husband took of the said perpetrator munching away at the Virginia Creeper!

Last year I also found a Lorquin's Admiral caterpillar by tracking the frass on a plant in my back yard. The caterpillar made a pupa on the plant and I watched it faithfully for several days. Unfortunately, the timing didn't work out well, and I was at work on the day that the butterfly emerged. When I got home, all I saw was the empty pupa.

So, thanks for teaching us to pay attention to the small things! Leanne